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Group Therapy for Venetian Adolescents? Giannantonio Bernardi's "Prudence, a didactic prolusion" (Venice, 1709) and Jesuit Moral Counselling in Verse

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Abstract

While Jesuits composed more Latin didactic poetry than any other order or profession in the early modern period, they—perhaps surprisingly—rarely chose moral, political, or spiritual subjects for versification in this genre. One of the few exceptions to the rule is *Prudentia, prolusio didascalica* (Prudence, a didactic prolusion) by the Paduan-born Jesuit Giannantonio Bernardi (1670–1743), first published in Venice in 1709. Bernardi seems to have spent his whole life as a teacher, preacher, and confessor in northern Italy, apart from a stint accompanying his penitent, the Venetian envoy and future Doge, Carlo Ruzzini, to Constantinople. This paper sets Bernardi's didactic poem in the context of some other Jesuit didactic poems of moral or spiritual counsel, especially Pierre Mambrun's *Psychourgicon: De cultura animi* (La Flèche: ex officina Gervasii Laboe, 1661), as well as a selection of his other moral writings. It finds the Jesuit dimension to Bernardi's poem more in its literary and institutional contexts and paratexts than in the bare philosophical doctrine it relays.

Keywords

neo-Latin – didactic poetry – prudence – Giannantonio Bernardi – Pierre Mambrun – Tommaso Ceva – Lucretius – Virgil – Jesuits – Venice

Of the several hundred classical-style didactic poems composed by Jesuits in the early modern period, those devoted explicitly to spiritual, moral, or political

themes are in the minority. Surprisingly, perhaps, Jesuits seem more often to have versified natural than moral philosophy, turning their Virgilian pens more readily to the cultivation of the countryside than of the soul.¹ Granted, two Jesuit poems on the passions are among the most interesting examples of the genre from its heyday in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Lieven De Meyere's (1655–1730) *De ira libri iii* grafts Senecan philosophy onto the somewhat paradoxical Ovidian stocks of the *Ars amatoria* and *Remedia amoris* to provide verse inoculation against the “disease” of anger.² Pierre Brumoy's (1688–1742) twelve-book *De motibus animi* (On the passions) combines didactic and dramatic modes to spectacular literary effect.³ Both these poets seem to have anticipated an audience beyond the Jesuit classroom or college.

The Italian Francesco Grimaldi (c. 1680–1740), on the other hand, will primarily have had his rhetoric students at the Collegio Romano in his sights when he offered worldly Ovidian-Horatian instruction in his “On City Life” (*De vita urbana*, Rome: Typis Antonii de Rubeis, 1725).⁴ The “Psychurgy or On the Cultivation of the Soul” (*Psychourgicon: De cultura animi*, La Flèche: ex officina Gervasii Laboe, 1661) by French Jesuit Pierre Mambrun (1601–61)—the middle poem in his Virgilian trilogy also comprising nine eclogues and an epic, “Constantine, or Idolatry Vanquished” (*Constantinus, sive idololatria*

- 1 E.g. Pierre Mambrun, *Psychourgicon: De cultura animi in Eclogae et De cultura animi libri iv* (La Flèche: ex officina Gervasii Laboe, 1661); Benedetto Rogacci, *Euthymia seu de tranquillitate animi* (Rome: Typis, et expensis Io. Iacobi Komarek, Bohemi, 1690); Francesco Grimaldi, *De vita urbana* (Rome: typis Antonii de Rubeis, 1725), Grimaldi, *De vita oeconomica* (Rome: apud Jo. Mariam Salvioni, 1738), and Grimaldi, *De vita aulica opus posthumum* (Rome: ex Typographia Antonii de Rubeis, 1741); Francesco Benci, *De optima ratione tranquillioris vitae instituendae*, in *Carmina libri iv* (Rome: apud Jacobum Tornerium, 1590). Some of these poems are discussed in Yasmin Haskell, *Loyola's Bees: Ideology and Industry in Jesuit Latin Didactic Poetry* (Oxford: British Academy and Oxford University Press, 2003), Ch. 5.
- 2 See Yasmin Haskell, “Early Modern Anger Management: Seneca, Ovid, and Lieven De Meyere's *De ira libri tres* (Antwerp, 1694),” in *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 18, no. 1 (2011): 36–51. De Meyere also wrote a didactic poem on the education of a prince: Lieven de Meyere, *De institutione principis libri tres* (Brussels: typis Eugenii Henrici Frick, 1716).
- 3 See Karin Kukkonen, “The Literary Designer Environments of Eighteenth-Century Jesuit Poetics,” forthcoming in *The History of Distributed Cognition: Enlightenment and Romanticism*, ed. Miranda Anderson, George Rousseau, and Michael Wheeler (np: nd) and Yasmin Haskell, “Performing the Passions: Pierre Brumoy's *De motibus animi* between Dramatic and Didactic Poetry,” in *Changing Hearts: Performing Jesuit Emotions between Europe, Asia and the Americas*, ed. Yasmin Haskell and Raphaële Garrod (Leiden: Brill, 2017).
- 4 Grimaldi begs that “especially you, young men, be favorable, in your speech and in your hearts: the author dedicates this work of his to you” [*Praecipue, Juvenes, linguisque animisque favete: / Hoc suus, hoc vobis dedicat Author opus*] (Grimaldi, *De vita urbana*, 3).

debellata, Paris: ex officina Dion Bechet & Lud. Billani, 1658)—is also addressed to “young men” (43)—again, presumably, the poet’s students. It is divided into four books corresponding to the four cardinal virtues of Aquinas, the first of which is devoted to prudence. The main focus of this chapter, however, is a didactic poem on prudence published half a century later: *Prudentia, prolusio didascalica* by the Paduan Jesuit Giannantonio Bernardi (1670–1743).⁵ Bernardi’s “didactic prolusio” was addressed to his rhetoric students in Venice and first published there in 1709. By attending closely to the pragmatics of the poem—its literary and institutional contexts and paratexts—we learn more about Jesuit understandings of prudence and approaches to moral counseling in this period than would be evident from a superficial paraphrase of its didactic contents.

It will be useful first to set Bernardi’s didactic poem in the context of his other moral writings. In the general preface to his collected *Carmina*,⁶ he envisages “teaching his adolescent hearers in such a way that they might learn from those very precepts not only to avoid faults of style but also of life; and from those same examples to compose characters no less than verses.”⁷ His verses are offered as “flowers” and “remedies” for the vices to which younger readers and the present age are especially prone: “since when they are out of the care of their parents and sight of their preceptors they fancy themselves citizens and free to do as they please” (6). Continuing the medical metaphor, Bernardi suggests

5 He died in Bologna after teaching rhetoric in Venice, philosophy in Parma, theology in Bologna, and serving as rector in Mantua, director of studies in Busseto, and superior of the professed house in Venice. According to James J. Mertz, S.J., John P. Murphy, S.J., and J. IJsewijn, eds., *Jesuit Latin Poets of the 17th and 18th Centuries: An Anthology of Neo-Latin Poets* (Bolchazy-Carducci: Wauconda, Ill, 1989), 203, he accompanied Venetian envoy, Carlo Ruzzini, to Constantinople in 1712–13, although other sources suggest that embassy took place in 1707.

6 Giannantonio Bernardi, *Carmina* (Bologna: typis Ferdinandi Pisarri, 1715), dedicated to Cardinal George Corner [Cornaro] (1658–1722). The collection also contains Bernardi’s prose “prolusio” on the respective merits of reading Cicero versus Tacitus, dedicated to Carlo Ruzzini and first published in Venice in 1704 (Bernardi, *Carmina*, 323–94).

7 Bernardi, *Carmina*, page 5 of unnumbered preface: *ita videlicet adolescentulos auditores instituens, ut ipsi discerent et ab iisdem preceptis non tam linguae vitia cavere, quam vitae; et exemplis ab iisdem non minus mores, quam versus componere*. Compare the ode he dedicated to “the most famous French Jesuit poet, Jacques Vanière, Poetry more useful and pleasant through the aid of Piety,” which celebrates the morally improving power of poetry (ibid., 202–4).

that, while it may not be possible to extirpate inveterate vices/illnesses, he can at least prevent the onset and spread of new disease by proffering these, as it were, medicinal herbs and flowers. He cites Pope Urban VIII's (1568–1644) strictures against immoral poetry and wishes his contemporaries would also forbear from setting poisons rather than medicines before tender and all-too corruptible young minds.⁸

While it is not possible in the present essay to review Bernardi's moral or spiritual poems in any detail, we may note a recurrent warning, in his elegies and *sermones*, against the *wrong* sorts of literature, art, and cultural influence (especially French), and a more or less explicit association of these with a decline in morals. Thus the fourth of the *Sermones* warns "his adolescent students of Poetry that the reading of many poets at once is often harmful, and that great caution must be exercised in reading those which treat of amorous and less honorable subjects."⁹ Bernardi teaches good taste and morals *pari passu* also in his second *sermo*, "Italy for the most part degenerating into foreign customs," and the third, "Final advice of the departing teacher to his audience, when at the time of the autumn vacation [he] was about to retire from the College of the Nobles of Parma, where he had taught Humanities." These poems, furthermore, offer a precious window on Jesuit literary education in Italy at the turn of the eighteenth century. In the fourth *sermo*, for example, Bernardi says that older students of Pallas (sc. of the rhetoric class?) are able to "digest" a wider variety of books, but that he is addressing those "who have scarce brushed the dust of the Grammar class from their feet" (156). Though he will "not object" to a boy reciting passages of Tasso, Marino, Boileau or Pradon at a dinner-party in front of his teacher and an admiring crowd of friends and relatives, "a parrot or a trained magpie could perhaps merit this praise" (157). Young poets must submit to their teacher's individual poetic dietary prescriptions and "set aside" modern literature "for a while"—not only French drama,¹⁰ but even,

8 See Andrée Thill and Gilles Bandérier, eds., *La Lyre jésuite: Anthologie de poèmes latins (1620–1730)* (Geneva: Droz, 1999), *Appendices*, 242–46, for Urban VIII's "One should Restore Poetry Adorned with Chaste and Pious Lessons to Its Primeval Glory" [*Poesis probis et piis ornata documentis primaevio decori restituenda*].

9 With this poem we might compare, for instance, the elegiac "On Virgil and Ovid, that is, whether one should be preferred to the other by students of Poetry; the author's judgment on each poet, from the mind of the learned; and how dangerous for adolescents is the reading of less chaste poets" [*De Virgilio atque Ovidio: Uterque scilicet poetices studiosis praeferri alteri debeat, poeta utroque, ex eruditorum mente, auctoris iudicium; et quam periculosa adolescentibus sit poetarum minus pudicorum Lectio*] (Bernardi, *Carmina*, 6–12).

10 Ibid., 158: "and whatever the French Melpomene has sent to us in her praised pages set aside for a while" [*Et quidquid mittit laudatis Gallica chartis / Ad nos Melpomene, paulum seponite*].

interestingly, neo-Latin works such as Pontano's *Urania* and Vida's *Christiad*. As for books about love and hunting, the poet admits to having come across a few of those in his own library, mixed in among the ancients:

and now this one and that, though only passingly perused, and scarcely read by me here and there, was pleasing to an amazing degree! Indeed, it seemed even sweeter to me than Virgil himself.

If anyone has such books in his possession, it would be better for him to hand them over to a “holy Cato” or “to burn them himself!”¹¹

Finally, Bernardi's academic oration, “On whether a Venetian youth who is studying literature and preparing thereafter to govern the Republic should give preference to the reading of Cicero or Tacitus,”¹² dedicated to Carlo Ruzzini (1653–1735) in 1704, assumes already in its title the interdependence of literary and moral/political judgment, and implicitly affirms the useful service the Jesuits were providing to the Republic in educating their noble sons in the humanities. Was it this oration, one wonders, which persuaded Ruzzini to engage Bernardi as his confessor on a diplomatic mission to Constantinople?¹³ However, whatever his merits as a literary and moral preceptor, Bernardi seems to have been a rather peevish traveller and travel correspondent.¹⁴

We come, then, to the “didactic prolusion” on prudence—but first, to its paratexts. In his dedication to Venetian patrician and sometime mathematician,¹⁵

¹¹ Ibid., 158–59.

¹² Compare the elegiac poem comparing Seneca and Cicero “and what is to be admired and imitated in both” (Ibid., 13–15).

¹³ I have not seen Bernardi's oration *Nell'ingresso solenne dell' Ill^{mo} ed Ecc^{mo} Sig. Cav. Carlo Ruzzini, Procurator di S. Marco per merito* (Venice: Girolamo Albizzi, 1706).

¹⁴ For present purposes we leave to one side the fascinating series of three poems Bernardi composed about this mission and addressed “to his Venetian friends”: the first imitating Ovid's journey into exile; the second in which, “under the allegorical cover of a sailor, the author describes his life at court”; and the third, “from the city of Constantinople, a description of that city, and of all the many occasions for pity and grief it provided the author when he was there” (Ibid., 96–118).

¹⁵ The dedication printed in 1715 is updated from the 1709 first edition. I cite the 1715 *Carmina* throughout unless otherwise stated.

Cristino Martinelli (1653–?),¹⁶ Bernardi explains that he had initially committed the “first principles and rules of Prudence” to a “humble metre, befitting the didactic subject,” when that well-known Senecan dictum had occurred to him: “It is a long road to Virtue through precepts; short and effective through Examples.” Martinelli will serve as a “great example, and one already very conspicuous to our Venetian youths.”¹⁷ He is praised for his piety and public service, his fairness, integrity, equanimity, and, especially, for having emerged without blemish even from those “slippery years of the early part of our life, and from the midst of those enticements to pleasure and provocations to vice.”¹⁸ It is not difficult to see why the Jesuit teacher will have sought to associate a man of Martinelli’s pedigree and reputation with a didactic poem aimed at adolescent hearers/readers (as he explicitly states). But even more significant, I think, is the connection Bernardi seeks to establish between Martinelli’s prudence and his literary and scientific pursuits:

But I would say that what is really praiseworthy and uniquely commendable in you is that you demonstrate by your own example that a love of learning is not an impediment to public life but rather an aid; and that it is far easier for you¹⁹ to maintain that [love of learning] within limits through good sense/discretion [*sapientia*] than it is for others through laziness.²⁰

Martinelli’s studies, Bernardi points out, do not detract a jot from his service to the Republic and from the demands of friendship and urbane sociability—yet he always manages to find time for “learned solitude.” Indeed, in his leisure time he turns not to pleasures, but to letters, and not to those of a superficial and trivial kind but to serious scholarship and natural science, and “to the sacred shrines of the deepest Wisdom. This is the greatest pleasure for you, which is a mental discipline; this is the sweetest relaxation from your labors, which is an education in morals.”²¹ Bernardi effectively casts Martinelli as the ideal citizen, if not Jesuit: learned, industrious, and yet worldly and affable,

16 Bernardi, *Carmina*, 274. See the bibliographical note in Emmanuele Antonio Cicogna, *Delle iscrizioni veneziane raccolte ed illustrate* (Venice: Giuseppe Molinari, 1842), 5:389–92. Martinelli was also a keen botanist and collector of botanical books.

17 Bernardi, *Carmina*, 267.

18 Ibid., 269.

19 1715 tibi: 1709 nobis.

20 Bernardi, *Carmina*, 269.

21 Ibid., 270.

with impeccable morals. He is, in short, the perfect model of Jesuit prudence. The dedication is, in some ways, integral to our experience, if not understanding, of the poem itself.

In the 1715 edition, the dedication to Martinelli is supplemented by a new preface to the reader.²² Bernardi defends the “unequal style” of his poem as a deliberate choice: more simple and modest in the delivery of precepts, more ornate and bold in the elaboration of examples. He invokes Lucretius’s metaphor of the honeyed cup to excuse his indulgence in comparisons (“similitudines”) and the like, which he has employed to make the arid subject more appealing to his adolescent audience. As far as the philosophical contents of the poem are concerned, he declares that he has adhered closely to the opinions of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas.²³ As we have already intimated, however, the interest of Bernardi’s *Prudentia* for us lies less in the doctrine it directly relays than between and beyond its lines—that is, in the poet’s display of his command of an increasingly fashionable genre for the Jesuits (classical didactic verse), in the “group counselling” function inherent in the institutional performance for which it was originally composed, and the uses and re-uses invited by its paratexts.

The poem printed in the 1715 *Carmina* is corrected and augmented from the 1709 first edition, and now divided into two books: “the first describing the nature of Prudence and its Functions; the other its Vices, or the Extremes, as they say, which are opposed to it.”²⁴ It seems, however, that even the single book version of 1709 was never delivered as Bernardi originally intended—that is, orally, at the beginning of the academic year—to his Venetian rhetoric students: he was already teaching philosophy at the College of the Nobles in Parma at the time of publication. Both the first and revised editions are divided into numbered

22 The *ad lectorem* of 1709 is a simply a synopsis of the poem. See *Appendix*.

23 Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* VI and Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* II.i, 57–58. Paul Grendler points out that “Jesuits [...] viewed moral philosophy as a minor subject. The Society introduced a professorship of moral philosophy into the Collegio Romano in 1562, but not until 1593 did it become a permanent lectureship. And among Italian Jesuit schools, only the Collegio Romano and the part-Jesuit University of Parma are known to have offered courses in moral philosophy in the early seventeenth century. The teachers at the Collegio Romano viewed moral philosophy as separate from, but with some connections to, theology; hence, their commentaries on the *Ethics* added references to Scripture, Thomas Aquinas, and other philosophical and religious authors. On the other hand, the *Ratio Studiorum* instructed professors of moral philosophy to teach the *Nicomachean Ethics* without digressing into theological questions.” Paul Grendler, *The University of Mantua, the Gonzaga, and the Jesuits, 1584–1630* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 201–2.

24 Bernardi, *Carmina*, 273.

paragraphs which are keyed to synopses of their contents (the *argumenta* preceding each of the two books of 1715). These paratextual aids were prepared to facilitate understanding and, presumably, consultation of the poem, beyond its original occasion (see Appendix).²⁵ Bernardi's *Prudentia* may be compared in this respect to the *Euthymia, seu de tranquillitate animi* (Euthymia, or, on tranquillity of mind": Rome, 1690) by Benedetto Rogacci (1646–1719), who taught rhetoric to Jesuit novices at the novitiate of Sant'Andrea al Quirinale, and the *Ars bene scribendi* (Art of writing well: Rome, 1709) by Rainier Carsughi (1647–1709), professor of rhetoric at the Roman College.²⁶

The reference to Lucretius in Bernardi's preface to the reader prompts us to wonder whether his poem demonstrates any literary influence of that perennially controversial poet (as does, for example, Rogacci's). On the surface, at least, it has a more "pedestrian," sententious, almost Horatian, style, recalling that of Bernardi's *Sermones*. It also bears comparison with the anti-Lucretian *Philosophia novo-antiqua* (Milan: Sumptibus Dominici Bellegattæ, 1704) by Milanese Jesuit and mathematician, Tommaso Ceva (1648–1737), a poet Bernardi certainly admired.²⁷ Both Ceva and Bernardi underscore the Horatian commonplace of the middle path.²⁸

- 25 The *ad lectorem* of the 1709 edition announces: "So that you may observe the order of the whole work and its contents at one glance, at its threshold (which I know is very much appreciated by many), here, dear Reader, is a Synopsis of all those things which, insofar as they go towards Prudence, are treated here, divided and corresponding to numbers placed in the margins of the book" (9).
- 26 In Rogacci's poem the synopsis of the work is published at the end; in Carsughi's, the summary of each section appears in the margin. The use of numbered paragraphs was not restricted to Jesuit *didactic* poems, however. See Jacob Bidermann, *Herodias* (Dillingen: apud Udalricum Rem, 1622).
- 27 Ceva is mentioned by Bernardi in his second satire in a list of excellent modern Italian Latin poets. On the combination of down-to-earth Horatian and grander Lucretian voices in Ceva's poem, see Yasmin Haskell, "Sleeping with the Enemy: Tommaso Ceva's Use and Abuse of Lucretius in the *Philosophia novo-antiqua* (Milan, 1704)," in *What Nature Does Not Teach: Didactic Literature in the Medieval and Early Modern Periods*, ed. Juanita Ruys (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008), 497–520. On Ceva, see also Marco Leone, "Milano chiama Napoli: Tommaso Ceva, Nicola Giannettasio e il latino gesuitico tra Sei e Settecento," in *Geminae voces: Poesie in latino tra Barocco e Arcadia*, ed. Marco Leone (Lecce: Congedo, 2007), 71–94; Emanuele Colombo, "O jesuíta Tommaso Ceva em Milão no século XVIII," *Letras* 46 (2012): 85–107.
- 28 Bernardi, *Prudentia*, 1, §3, 280: "Indeed, though Prudence is content in her own kingdom and leaves to the virtues their power undisturbed and their individual functions, she

The *Prudentia* is in hexameters, the original meter of classical didactic verse but also, of course, of epic. It begins with an epic recusatio “Let others sing of arms and men; I have chosen to sing of Prudence, which first made men invincible and which is able now to disarm, now to arm Mars.”²⁹ At first Bernardi appears to be making even more exalted claims for his subject than that of epic, but he promptly banishes the exulting Pegasus from his work: “Prudence forbids her poet to be so grand; the matter itself, scarcely content to be taught, shuns all trappings and doesn’t recognize herself in them.”³⁰ Calliope, formerly agreeable, is now sullen when she hears his proposal; having previously rejoiced in his “happy trifles” she turns her modest face away from the “knotty work” (“tetricum opus”). Bernardi compares her to a young girl who, imitating her mother, beautifies herself in front of the mirror only to have her stern father forbid her to leave the house. At the beginning of the second book there is another, almost comic, *captatio benevolentiae*, where Bernardi cajoles and rebukes Calliope for rejecting him in terms reminiscent of a lover’s tiff (perhaps to ingratiate himself with his student-poet readers?):

But how much greater cause for suffering have you been for me! It wasn’t just once, was it, since you used to summon me from Pindus so often as a boy—don’t pretend you don’t remember!—that I scrambled up the cruel mountain, not knowing the destination or the way, that I might follow your orders, even in the fading light, with no thought for my dinner and forgoing sleep?³¹

A note of Horatian self-deprecation may also be detected in a programmatic passage later in the first book: “Perhaps someone who has known me for a long

nevertheless directs them all in a fixed order, and, to this extent, she herself is the leader between the two extremes, she points out the middle path and draws back those who wander” [*Quippe, licet contenta suo Prudentia regno / Omnibus intactum jus, et sua cuique relinquat / Munera Virtuti, cunctas tamen ordine certo / Dirigit, atque adeo extremum dux inter utrumque / Ipsa viam signat mediam, et deducit euntes*].

29 Bernardi, *Prudentia*, 1, §1, 279: *Arma, virosque canant alii. PRUDENTIA nobis; / Invictos quae prima viros facit, armaque Marti / Nunc auferre potest, nunc addere, visa canendi / Materies.*

30 Bernardi, *Prudentia*, 1, §2, 279: *Tam grandem vetat esse suum Prudentia vatem; / Ipsaque materies, aegrè contenta doceri, / Excludit phaleras, nec se cognoscit in illis.*

31 Bernardi, *Prudentia*, 2 §1, 297: *At quanto de te major mihi causa dolendi est! / Anne semel tantum, cum me tam saepe vocares / E Pindo puerum, (neque enim meminisse negabis) / Obrepsi saevum in montem metaeque, viaeque / Ignarus; tuque ut possem vel nocte maligna / Jussa sequi, coenam imprudens, somnumque reliqui?*

time will laugh at me daring to pass on the laws of a virtue I do not possess.”³² Bernardi affects to rouse a few sparks of Virgilian/ Lucretian inspiration—but extinguishes them almost in the same breath:

This is the work, this is the labour, for the Muse has for a long time protested that some things cannot be sung in Latin, now at last I begin to tell, and I plead for mercy rather than praise [...]. What will I set down here, or to which path will I, doubtfully, turn? Indeed, it is not given to anyone to attain by easy steps the sublime mountain he has been able to ascend with his eyes. Refer the examples to others, the lessons to me. I advise what is proper, and what is not, like a stone marker that indicates the way and shows it to others, though it remains immobile.³³ Although, as she sings, Prudence fans some fires or other in me, and makes me her poet, instructing him by degrees, and she learns to be loved by him.³⁴

In his occasional but cautious evocation of Lucretius,³⁵ and in his use of colourful and concrete examples—from animals and medicine to house-building and

32 Bernardi, *Prudentia*, 1, §6, 283; *Forsan at hic aliquis, cui longo ego cognitus usu, / Rideat audentem peregrinae tradere leges / Virtutis.*

33 Is there an oblique reference here to Ignatius's instructions on giving the Spiritual Exercises? “The one giving the Exercises [...] ought not to lean or incline in either direction but rather, while standing by like the pointer of a scale in equilibrium, to allow the Creator to deal immediately with the creature and the creature with its Creator and Lord.” See *Ignatius of Loyola: The Spiritual Exercises and Selected Works*, trans. George E. Ganss (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1992), 25–26. See the advice to the exercitant, *Ignatius of Loyola*, 77: “The First Method of Making a Sound and Good Election, The Second Point: ... I should find myself in the middle, like the pointer of a balance, in order to follow that which I perceive to be more to the glory and praise of God our Lord and the salvation of my soul”.

34 Bernardi, *Prudentia*, 1, §6, 283, 4: *Idque opus, is labor est; nam quaedam haud posse latine / Musa cani dudum inclamat) jam dicere tandem aggredior; veniamque mihi pro laude paciscor. ... Quid referam hic, aut quo dubius me tramite vertam? / Nempe haud cuique datum est facili pertingere gressu, / Quem sublime oculis potuit conscendere montem. / Exemplum ex aliis, ex me documenta referte. / Quid deceat, quid non, moneo: ceu saxus index / Signat iter, monstratque aliis, immobilis ipse. / Quanquam nescio quos in me simul excitat ignes, / Dum canitur, fingitque suum Prudentia vatem / Paulatim erudiens, et ab illo discit amari.* See Virgil, *Aeneid* 6, 129; Lucretius, *De rerum natura* 1, 136–39, 921ff.

35 For instance, *Prudentia*, 1, §8, 287, Bernardi describes the behavior of the Molossan hound chasing a deer or hare to illustrate the existence of prudence even in the animal kingdom. When the hound encounters a parting of ways he sniffs now this way, now that, for the “tracks of the known scent” [*noti ... vestigia odoris*], but if he cannot detect it he will

the marketplace³⁶—Bernardi's poem again puts us in mind of the philosophical poem of his Milanese confrère, Tommaso Ceva.

Pierre Mambrun's *Psychourgicon: De cultura animi*, on the four cardinal virtues, has a more conventionally Virgilian opening than Bernardi's.³⁷ The French poet affirms from the outset that his theme is grand, but he will not attempt to cover truth in a veil of fiction in the manner of allegorical epic. Instead, he invites his young readers to accompany him on the "right path, where Christ invites us."³⁸ Mambrun maintains a more or less elevated style, devoting the next eight pages to natural-philosophical exposition of the marvellous architecture of the brain, the eye, the faculties of memory, and the circulation of the blood, in a loosely Lucretian manner, but building an ostentatiously *anti*-Lucretian argument for intelligent design:

Is then a work of such complexity to be attributed to fortune, which turns everything in its blind whirlpool? Does not shame, or a mind aware of divine truth, prevent us from ascribing so many kinds of thing, so many members, so many limbs, parts so various in their use, which all cohere so smoothly and beautifully into one body, to chance?³⁹

For the balance of his first book, on prudence, Mambrun turns to topics quite different from those that will be covered by Bernardi. Rather than dispensing Scholastic theory or practical precepts, Mambrun reviews the various choices of career open to his young readers and warns of their respective moral dangers, viz. soldier, lawyer, monk, priest—the last, all things considered, the best option. This choice of life path might be seen, of course, as a form of Ignatian "election."

instinctively take the third (sc. middle) path. See, Lucretius, *De rerum natura* 1, 402–9, on Memmius following the tracks of Lucretius's arguments to the truth, like a bloodhound.

36 Bernardi, *Prudentia*, 1, §7, 284, compares the process of determining the right course of action to young women comparing and contrasting different hair clasps (?) sent from Paris.

37 Thus the Virgilian series of interrogative adjectives, Mambrun, *Psychourgicon*, 43 (my emphasis): "What makes a Christian, what kindness of manners is preferred for the holy race, and which pursuits, finally, and customs befit kings and the labors of war, I ponder here" [*Christiadam quae res faciat, quae gratia morum / Sit sanctae potior genti, quae denique Reges / Et studia, & mores deceant, belloque labores, / Hinc meditor*].

38 Mambrun, *Psychourgicon*, 43.

39 Ibid., 49: *Ergone fortunae, coeco quae turbine versat / Omnia, debetur tantae molitio formae? / Ergone tot rerum species, tot membra, tot artus, / Tam varias usu partes, quae molliter unum / In corpus pulchre coeunt, ascribere sorti / Nil prohibet pudor, aut sancti mens conscia?*

Throughout the *Psychourgicon: De cultura animi*, Mambrun pays lip service, at least, to Virgil, the Jesuits' chief model in (didactic) poetry, dividing his poem into four books, articulating it with such Virgilian transitional phrases as "contemplator item,"⁴⁰ and imitating, for example, the episode of the Corycian gardener in *Georgics* 4.⁴¹ While Bernardi follows the Georgic map less closely, he does post a few obvious Virgilian flags.⁴² Thus in the second book he visits the "not all soils" topos, conceding that not everyone has a natural aptitude for Prudence:

Just as not every land will bear crops, vines cannot be sown in all, nor does any one soil bring forth everything, in the same way Prudence is grafted with difficulty onto some minds and, once grafted, fails to repay the futile effort. Often base nature struggles against harsh labor; or, if it responds to some degree to long cultivation, it nevertheless always relapses, remembering its vicious habit. Often its seeds are wasted because it is too susceptible to change through external causes; and exposed to an unfriendly sky it extinguishes the rising crop and hopes of a rich field. It is to be hoped that the mind is not rash nor dull, not too credulous, nor changeable by the slightest breeze.⁴³

40 Ibid., 47. Compare Virgil, *Georgics* 1:187.

41 See Haskell, *Loyola's Bees*, 247, 250–1.

42 For example, Bernardi, *Prudentia*, 2 § 6, 303: "I will now set forth the main part of my work, bearing many precepts; soon I will draw my weary sails to the wind and sail my eager boat to shore" [*Hanc ego praecipuam, praeceptaque multa ferentem, / Partem operis nunc expediam; mox carbasa vento / Fessa traham, atque alacrem deducam in littore pup-pim*]. See, *Georgics* 4:116–17. Bernardi seems almost to be teasing the reader with promises to bring his poem to a close: "I was going to end here, but now all at once many things occur to my mind, observations which attentive experience has piled up" [*Hinc mihi finis erat; sed menti plura recurrunt, / Nunc simul, observata memor quae suggerit usus*] (Bernardi, *Prudentia*, 2, §9, 307); and "but now the shore is nigh, and welcomes our returning boat from a distant sea, and greets her with a happy shout" [*Sed jam littus adest, cymbamque ex aequore longo / Gratatur reducem, et laeto clamore salutat*] (Bernardi, *Prudentia*, 2, §12, 311).

43 Bernardi, *Prudentia*, 2, §2, 298: *Ut non omne solum fruges, non omne serendae / Admittunt vites, neque humus fert omnia quaevis; / Haud aliter cuius aegre Prudentia menti / Inseritur, curamque inserta eludit inanem. / Saepe reluctatur duro natura labori / Improba; vel, siquid longae respondeat arti / Culta diu, tamen in vitium memor usque recurrit. / Saepe etiam externis frustratur semina causis / Mutari facilis; tristisque obnoxia Coelo / Surgentem extinguit segetem, spemque uberis agri. / Optandum est, ut non praeceps, obtusave mens sit, / Credula nec nimium, nec quavis mobilis aura.* See, Virgil, *Georgics* 2:109 (*Nec uero terrae ferre omnes omnia possunt*) and 1:145–6 (*labor omnia vicit / improbus et duris urgens in rebus egestas*).

Again, Virgil's praises of Italy in the second book of the *Georgics* as the land of perfect produce gives Bernardi a pretext to praise the *Venetians* as the most prudent of the Italians:

nor will grudging Fate, which stole your ancient empire [sc. Italians], ever take away this honor from you too. *Though others conquer cities by iron and fire, you are the first to conquer minds and hearts by your judgment.* But just as the Italians excel in this respect, the Venetians surpass all Italians, a race famous throughout the world for its gravity of counsel and sharp and shrewd minds. For indeed Nature endowed them with a teachable mind, one willing to submit to reason; and from their earliest years it planted a practical wisdom [lit. "grey hairs capable of things"] into their hearts [emphasis mine].⁴⁴

Even those who are not fortunate enough to be born Venetian, however, can improve their minds through effort and *cultivation*.⁴⁵ They should undertake much reading—of moral-philosophical works and of the deeds of the ancients. Yet no age is without its heroes, and the poem closes with an exhortation to the "Adriatic youth" to "consult the domestic examples around you, the historical tapestries hanging in your stately halls. Ponder here the illustrious faces of your ancestors, the venerable dwelling of great minds, in these the deliberations of

44 Bernardi, *Prudentia*, 2, §3, 299: *tibi nec, quae Sors invida priscum / Abstulit imperium, hoc etiam decus auferet unquam.* / Ut vincat alii ferroque, atque ignibus arces, / Iudicio tu prima animos, et pectora vincis. / Ut tamen hoc Itali praececellant nomine, cunctos / Excellunt Italos Veneti, gens inclyta Mundo / Pondere consilii, et solertis acumine mentis. / Quippe illis docilem, et vinci ratione volentem / Effinxit Natura animum; rerumque capacem / Canitiem cordis primis impressit ab annis. The highlighted phrase recalls not the *Georgics* but *Aeneid* 6. 851–3: "Remember, Roman, it is for you to rule the peoples with your authority – these will be your arts – and to impose the rule of peace, to spare the vanquished and crush the proud" [*tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento / (hae tibi erunt artes), pacique imponere morem, / parcere subiectis et debellare superbos*].

45 Bernardi, *Prudentia*, 2, §4, 299–300: "But if there is anyone to whom a poor soil has been allotted for his unfortunate mind (and even Italy isn't fertile in every region) let him be zealous in effort and cultivate it with art! What do we not owe to effort and art? By degrees even a sterile earth will become tame through tilling and bear crops and hear the prayers of the farmer" [*At, si quis tamen est (neque enim sat fertilis omni / Parte sui Italia est) fato sortitus iniquae / Triste solum mentis; studio nil lentus, et illud / Arte colat. Quid non studio debemus, et arti? / Ipsa etiam in fruges sterilis mansuescit arando / Paulatim tellus, atque audit vota coloni*]. For the celebration of georgic labor as a trope for apostolic spirituality, see Haskell, *Loyola's Bees*, passim.

the old Senate are dyed, and noble souls!”⁴⁶ Already in the first book Bernardi had praised the Venetians for their ability to sit on a decision,⁴⁷ and, in its long rhetorical finale—newly added in the 1715 version—celebrated their prudence in dealing with their enemies in the League of Cambrai (including the irascible Pope Julius), culminating in their glorious refusal of military assistance from the Turks:

Hence the Turks, taking pity at that time on the harsh travails of Venice, sent of their own accord a hundred phalanxes of their best knights and infantrymen to come to her aid in the war. But bold Venice refused to defend her cause, praised to Heaven, with *those* allies, with such arms, and preserved herself by her own authority alone. To such an extent was Prudence, guide in ambiguous War, able to keep the second Rome safe against so many strong foes from different quarters, and to extend her dominion far and wide, her empire restored.⁴⁸

Such patriotic flourishes are hardly surprising given the constitution of Bernardi's target audience of Venetian senators and their sons, nor, in the context of that original imagined performance, the Jesuit teacher's promotional demonstration of his Latin didactic wares in a politely self-effacing Horatian tone.

46 Bernardi, *Prudentia*, 2, §12, 311: *ADRIACI Juvenes ... exempla domestica circum / Consulite, et memores augusta per atria telas. / Hic vultus Proavum insignes, venerabile magnis / Mentibus hospitium; veterisque incocta Senatus / Consilia, et grandes animos expendite in illis.*

47 Bernardi, *Prudentia*, 1, §8, 286: “Thus the Romans conquered by waiting. Thus the Venetian fathers, whose Prudence is greater” [*Sic Romani vicere sedendo; / Sic Veneti, quorum major Prudentia, Patres*].

48 Ibid., 1, §10, 293: *Hinc centum lectas equitum, peditumque phalangas, / Venturum bello auxilium quas exhibet ultro / Thracia, tunc duos Veneti miserata labores; / Ipse tamen, non his sociis, nec talibus armis / Audax laudatam Coelo defendere causam, / Respuit, atque suo se tantum jure tuetur. / Usque adeo dux ambigui Prudentia Martis, / Tot contra validos diversis partibus hostes, / Incolumem potuit Romam servare secundam; / Et dominam late imperio extendisse recepto.* Bernardi may have retold this episode from Diego Saavedra Fajardo's popular treatise on prudence, *The Idea of a Politico-Christian Prince Represented in One Hundred Emblems* ([Munich, 1640] Milan, 1643). See Robert Bireley, *The Counter Reformation Prince: Anti-Machiavellianism or Catholic Statecraft in Early Modern Europe* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 198–99.

But what, finally, can be said about the prudential doctrine Bernardi explicitly teaches in his didactic prolusion? It is, first and foremost, a Christian one: “So let Piety and Shrewdness play their respective parts. Whatever other Masters may pass on and teach, if the former is lacking, in no way is it true Prudence.”⁴⁹ There is no further specification of these “other Masters,” even if there is an implied critique of the Machiavellian tradition.⁵⁰ Bernardi urges honesty as the best policy. Although we may find it necessary to dissimulate before those whom we believe to be untrustworthy, we should not *simulate*.⁵¹ Nor should those who aspire to prudence be free in their spoken promises and frigid in their actions, nor praise in public what they condemn in private.⁵² Towards the end of the poem, Bernardi glosses his instructions with biblical references. So he explains that the “Madness of a dull mind” (“hebetis *Vesania mentis*”) is better designated “Simplicitas” in the Tuscan language, but this is not that simplicity alluded to in Matthew 10—“be as wise [“prudentes”] as serpents and as simple as doves”—but rather that attributed to Ephraim in Hosea 7.11, who is described as “like a dove, easily deceived and senseless” (2, §8, 306).⁵³

49 Bernardi, *Prudentia*, 2, §11, 311: *Inde suas Pietas aget, et Solertia partes; / Quidquid enim tradant alii, doceantque Magistri, / Altera si desit, nusquam Prudentia vera est*. Compare Bernardi, *Prudentia*, 1, §5, 283: “Prudence offers no assistance to Vice” [*Nulli praestat opem Vitio Prudentia*].

50 Jesuit poet and theologian Lieven de Meyere issued a more explicit warning in the third book of his “On the Education of a Prince”: “Let the Prince especially shun from his youth impious writings and harmful books, and Machiavelli, and the volumes of the hellish monster. That page is steeped in poison, and scorns God and sacred things, and teaches us not to care what is permitted or forbidden, what Heaven approves or condemns” [*Impia praecipuè documenta, librosque nocentes, / Et Machiavellum, stygiiue volumina monstri / Horreat à teneris Princeps. Perfusa veneno / Pagina, contemprixque Dei rerumque sacrarum, / Quid licitum, vetitumve, probet vel damnet Olympus / Nil curare docet*], in *Poematum libri duodecim* (Brussels: typis Eugenii Henrici Frick, 1727), 183. See Robert Bireley, *Counter Reformation Prince*; Harro Höpfl, *Jesuit Political Thought: The Society of Jesus and the State, c. 1540–1630* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), especially Ch. 8, “Reason of State, Prudence, and the Academic Curriculum,” 164–85; Harald E. Braun, *Juan de Mariana and Early Modern Spanish Political Thought* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), Ch. 4, “Prudence, History and Providence,” 101–34.

51 See Braun, *Juan de Mariana*, 120–21, on Jesuit writers’ criticisms of the maxim attributed to Louis XI of France, “he who does not know how to dissimulate, does not know how to rule” [*Quis nescit (dis)simulare, nescit regnare*].

52 Bernardi, *Prudentia*, 2, §9, 308.

53 See the citations from Proverbs and Isaiah, 310–11.

Does Bernardi teach a specifically *Jesuit* philosophy of prudence? In assigning it a central role in directing the virtues (1, §3, 280) he follows Aquinas, but differs from, e.g., Leonard Lessius (1554–1623), who concedes it a much reduced scope in his *De iustitia et iure*.⁵⁴ There is nothing in the poem, moreover, to suggest that Bernardi was concerned with the subtleties of Jesuit political writing on prudence, e.g. the discussions of Giovanni Botero (c. 1544–1617), Pedro de Ribadeneyra (1527–1611), or Juan de Mariana (1536–1624). The Jesuit dimension of the poem is more implicit than substantive: in its prescription of the reading of edifying (ancient) literature,⁵⁵ its appeal to classical stories and myths, indeed, in its very form and its (virtual) performativity. That is, we must be alert in our reading to its literal and metaphorical mise-en-scène, the Jesuit classroom/college. Thus, for example, Bernardi compares the way we select the best, or at least the better, course of action, in the same way that a prudent judge (“Praesul”) decides which of the “schoolboys who are eager for a higher office” will be elevated, having consulted the “votes of the learned committee.”⁵⁶

54 Thus Höpfl, *Jesuit Political Thought*, 174: “In his account of the cardinal virtues, Lessius made barely a reference to prudence. He did not allow prudence to determine the ends conduct should aim at, because he had already assigned that role to virtue, and knowledge of virtue to theology and casuistry. The drift of Lessius’ thought was therefore inexorably in the direction of assigning to prudence the restricted role of determining *means*.”

55 “Then it’s worth your while frequently to read the writings of the learned, and the records of the ancient men” [*Inde manu pretium est operae versare frequenti / Doctorum scripta, et veterum monumenta virorum*] (Bernardi, *Prudentia*, 2, §4, 300).

56 *Ibid.*, 1, §8, 286. On the other hand, when Bernardi exhorts us to seek out good, but not overly subtle counsellors, he seems to warn against academic advisers: “To be sure certain subtle minds find a knot in a bulrush [sc. find difficulty where there is none] and then approve of nothing, or they weave airy webs with slender threads and ambitiously strive to distinguish themselves with Phrygian needle. Neither Athena nor Arachne would create a more beautiful work—but only to the eye, and marvellous to relate! These—who are, moreover, generally sharper in other studies—the experts in affairs, who are more prudent, forbid us to consult in practical matters. Therefore consult the former when you have a philosophical or learned query, but the latter if you have to do something which requires a certain practical experience and conduct” [*Scilicet aut facilem inveniant subtilia quaedam / Ingenia in scirpo nodum, et nihil inde probatur: / Aut gracili aeras texunt subtegmine telas, / Et Phrygiâ distinguere acu ambitosa laborant. / Nec melius Pallas, melius nec pingat Arachne / Pulchrum opus; at visu solum, et mirabile dictu. / Hos, aliis porro in studiis plerunque sagaces, / Consuluisse viros prohibent in rebus agendis / Experti rerum, et quibus est prudentia major. / Ergo illos Sophiae in dubiis, studiisque Minervae; / Hos idem contra tu consule, siquid agendum est, / Quod certam rerum praxin, moresque requirat*] (*ibid.*, 2, §7, 285).

Our teacher-poet can hardly have presumed to teach the Venetian senators he invoked in his proem how to suck eggs of state. The fourth section of the first book, on “how difficult it is for adolescents continually to hold to the middle path; and what they should do until they become more prudent with age, lest they fall into either extreme,” confirms what the poem’s paratexts have already told us: that he was primarily addressing their sons.⁵⁷ Yet Bernardi is no tyrannical pedagogue but an empathetic counsellor. In the aforementioned section, he uses the inclusive first person plural, “abripimur,” to describe the deranging effects of sexual love on our reason: “This is my first warning, and it is well to repeat it, young men, as you have less experience, you whom blind and unbridled desire often drives [...] *we* are carried away, wretches.”⁵⁸ And while, in an elaborate simile, he compares giving in to lust to the River Po breaking its banks, he also warns against the opposite extreme, that of “erring through excessive desire for the Good,” comparing those who fall into this danger to the hungry bear raiding Attic beehives.⁵⁹

A recurring theme in the poem is the avoidance of the extremes of pleasure and pain, love and hatred so that we can make decisions free from partiality or desire for revenge. There is an almost Ignatian ring to Bernardi’s advice: “Do not instantly approve the plan that first presents its image to your mind, nor instantly reject the one whose initial image your mind disapproves.”⁶⁰

57 Compare the dedication to Martielli, where he accedes to the importuning of friends to publish the poem, in repayment of a debt of gratitude to Venice, since “I have almost no use for it, [since it was] only designed for Venetian adolescents” (266).

58 Bernardi, *Prudentia*, 1, §4, 281: *Hoc primum moneo, hoc iterum monuisse juvabit, / O Juvenes, quorum minor experientia, quosque / Caecus agit plerunque, et fraeni nescius ardor / Abripimur miseri* (emphasis mine). Interestingly, the pathetic parenthesis appears first in the corrected edition.

59 Ibid., 1, §4, 281: “Here the imprudent one spreads his greedy maw and his gaping soul, giving no consideration to the avenging anger of the bees. Thus impulse drags untamed youth now this way and that—Reason still rules uncertainly—and leads it astray” [*Huc avidos rictus, animamque effundit hiantem / Imprudens; neque Apum ultrices considerat iras. / Sic trahit indocilem nunc huc, nunc impetus illuc; / Non jam certa regit Ratio, ducitque juven tam*].

60 Bernardi, *Prudentia*, 1, §7, 285: *Nec, quod prima sui menti commendat imago, / protinus id placeat; nec menti protinus illud displiceat, quod prima sui condemnat imago*. See also “The First Method of Making a Sound and Good Election... The Second Point ... I ought to find myself indifferent, that is, without any disordered affection, to such an extent that I am not more inclined or emotionally disposed toward taking the matter proposed rather than relinquishing it, nor more toward relinquishing it rather than taking it” (Ganss, *Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*, 77).

According to Carlos Sommervogel, Bernardi's first published work was a record of his experiences giving the Spiritual Exercises in Venice (to persons of both sexes).⁶¹ Perhaps it is no accident that the poet places a premium on finding good counsellors (confessors?) and confiding only in honest, intelligent people.⁶² If, however, a trusted "older Chiron or wise Achates is absent" ("absit / Forte aut senior Chiron, aut sanus Achates"), we should imagine that a close friend is asking *us* advice about the same problem, and how we would respond, consulting ourselves as if the decision was not ours to make.⁶³ The idea recalls a letter of Seneca to Lucilius (*Ep. morales* 25.5), reporting Epicurus's injunction: "behave as if Epicurus is watching. It is without doubt useful to have appointed, and maintain, a guard on oneself, someone you respect, whom you judge to take part in your thoughts."⁶⁴ And yet the suggestion is also, of course, broadly reminiscent of the internal dialogues with self and others prescribed on nearly every page of the *Spiritual Exercises*. It is nevertheless "difficult," concedes Bernardi, "to bring such scrutiny to one's own affairs: we often see better in another's. Presumably everyone's own desires draw a veil over his eyes so that he cannot see the better course, or prevent him from following it by weaving

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- 61 *Spiritualia Sancti Ignatii exercitia in Provincia Veneta sexui hominum utrique magno animarum fructu communicata anno MDCCI et in lucem edita a P.A. M.B. Soc. Jesu* (Parma: Ex typographia Joseph Rosati). Sommervogel reports that, while this work was brought to publication by Antonio Maria Betti, S.J., it was asserted by Father Zaccaria to be by Bernardi; and that this attribution was supported by the dates when Bernardi was studying theology, Carlos Sommervogel, S.J. (and Augustin & Aloys de Backer, S.J.), *Bibliothèque de la Compagnie de Jésus: Nouvelle édition* (Brussels: Oscar Schepens, 1890–1932), 1:348.
- 62 Paragraphs 7–9 of the first book cover the three offices ("munera") of Prudence: to consult well, to select well, and to judge or command well (following the Aristotelian categories of "Gnome," "Synesis" and "Eubulia"); Paragraphs 7–10 of the second book discuss the extremes of "Calliditas, sive Astutia" and "Stoliditas, sive Astutia," falseness or hypocrisy, and vainglory.
- 63 Bernardi uses the stock example of devoted male friendship, Orestes and Pylades. In another section, he warns his readers against false friends (2, § 9, 308), speaking, he says, from experience. For Jesuit ideals of homophilic friendship, and Jesuit poetry about friendship in the eighteenth century, including student poetry, see Yasmin Haskell, "Arts and Games of Love: Genre, Gender and Special Friendships in Eighteenth-Century Jesuit Poetry," in *Ordering Emotions in Europe, 1100–1800*, ed. Susan Broomhall (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 225–44.
- 64 '*Sic fac' inquit 'omnia tamquam spectet Epicurus.' Prodest sine dubio custodem sibi imposuisse et habere quem respicias, quem interesse cogitationibus tuis iudices* (quoted from the online Latin Library: <http://www.thelatinlibrary.com/sen/seneca.ep3.shtml>; accessed November 17, 2016). I am grateful to Antonia Ruppel for this reference.

traps for his soul, and presenting specious reasons for delay.”⁶⁵ Hence, we are tempted to add, the need for a guide in the Spiritual Exercises.

An earlier section of the poem also has a Jesuit flavor. When discussing the second task of prudence, deliberation, Bernardi exhorts us to supplement “the happy industry of an ingenious mind” (“artificis [...] felix industria mentis”), that is, our reason, with the “skilled experience of things, [which] offers a second kind of mind” (“solers usus rerum, mens altera, praestat”).⁶⁶ If it is a stretch to read Bernardi’s association of intellectual industry and experience of the world in the light of Jesuit apostolic ideology, the lines that follow, encouraging us to take note of men’s different habits, ages, and *ingenia*, do seem to hint at a longer Jesuit preoccupation with psychological types and temperaments.⁶⁷ The discussion of aptitudes is reprised towards the end of the poem where Bernardi describes the extreme cases of the cunning and the simple man. Yet, even the most morally upright men, he tells us, are not always prudent in the smallest things. Why is this? The Jesuit is inclined to believe that “heroes too are often haunted by their own human ghosts, deep in their breasts; and a more simple mind flows out of them and is able to be penetrated by others, by a practised art.”⁶⁸ In his ensuing variation on the figure of the Corycian gardener in Virgil’s *Georgics* (4. 116–48)—almost *de rigueur* for Jesuit didactic poets—Bernardi nicely undercuts that episode’s idealizing nostalgia:

I myself remember a wise man, from when I was a boy—children remember things more clearly—and he was certainly long respected in his city, and deservedly so, because his conduct conformed with his speech and other qualities of his great mind. There were one or two exceptions that occasioned in many people at that time both surprise and laughter; but it was also, nevertheless, great [laughter and surprise] on both sides. For he was said either to recount, or gladly to hear, his own praises, but about things he had no claim to be praised for, especially if he was arrogating to himself something about the fatherland, or of someone related to him by blood, from ancient times. This man was too good, he was

65 Bernardi, *Prudentia*, 2, §5, 302: *Sed talem praestare suis res ardua mentem: / Rebus in alterius melius plerunque videmus, / Scilicet aut oculis velat sua cuique cupido, / Ne videat meliora; aut, ne meliora sequatur, / Innectit laqueos animo, placitasque morandi / Praetendit causas.*

66 Ibid., 1, §8, 287. The phrase perhaps recalls Lucretius on human progress: *usus et impigrae simul experientia mentis / paulatim docuit pedetemptim progredientis* (5. 1451–52).

67 See e.g. Cristiano Casalini, “Disputa sugli ingeni: L’educazione dell’individuo in Huarte, Possevino, Persio e altri,” *Educazione: Giornale di pedagogia critica* 1, no. 1 (2012): 29–51.

68 Bernardi, *Prudentia* 2, §10, 309: *Humanos Heroes etiam sub pectore manes / Saepe suos patiuntur; et hinc mens effluit illis / Simplicius, notaque aliis penetrabilis arte.*

simple, and he was either less than he seemed, or, if not, he could have seemed to be so.⁶⁹

In exhorting his young readers to seek good counsel, to examine their own hearts and minds, and, finally, to observe humility—to realize the limits of their human powers to control the outcome of events—we can perhaps detect something of a Jesuit confessorial agenda in Bernardi's poem. And while he may not have been openly fishing for vocations, he does allude to the Ignatian ideal of blind obedience in its final pages:

Therefore, as the great Loyola rightly warned, may your mind and hand lend themselves to action as if nothing at all were due to you, but God was the origin, as if your mind and hand were adding nothing to those actions; in this way you should believe that God is the origin and responsible for everything in your actions.⁷⁰

In conclusion, it is worth reflecting that while much of the prudential literature of early modern writers was concerned with statecraft and the behavior of the prince, Bernardi's *Prudentia*, written in the second person, is principally concerned with how the student-reader (/–hearer) can know himself and his human limitations. Yet even as the classical didactic genre typically constructs an exclusive personal relationship between poet and addressee, it is important for us not to lose sight of the institutional genesis and projected performance of Bernardi's didactic proclusion. In both the poem and its paratexts the Jesuit professor envisages and mobilizes a *group* audience for, as it were, mutual moral and cultural counselling. Thus he appeals to historical, literary, and *living* examples of prudential wisdom (e.g. Martinelli; the Venetian fathers). And inasmuch as he teaches moral and literary discrimination simultaneously—in the *Prudentia* but also in some of the other Latin writings we have touched on

69 Bernardi, *Prudentia*, 2, § 10, 309–10: *Virum novisse sagacem / Ipse puer meminī: (pueris res altius haerent) / Quippe suae dudum fuerat spectabilis Urbi, / Et merito; mores nam convenienter in illo / Ibant, et voces, et magnae caetera menti. / Excipienda tamen res una, vel altera tantum, / In qua idem multis tunc admiratio, multis / Risus erat; sed erat tamen idem magnus utrisque. / Nempe suas aut ipse loqui, aut audire libenter / Dictus erat, non hoc laudandus nomine, laudes: / Praecipue siquid Patriae, aut sibi sanguine junctae / Stirpis, et antiquis sua facta referret ab annis. / Hic nimium bonus, hic simplex, et se minor ipso / Aut erat, aut poterat, si non erat, ille videri.*

70 Ibid., 2, § 11, 311: *Ergo (quod magnus recte Loyola monebat) / Sic tua se rebus mens, et manus addat agendis, / Ceu nil usque tibi praestet Deus auctor in illis: / Ceu tua nil rebus mens, et manus addat agendis, / Sic auctor, credas, Deus omnia praestet in illis.*

in this chapter—Bernardi embodies an understanding of “prudence” that is deeply implicated in Jesuit humanist education.

APPENDIX

Synopsis of Bernardi’s *Prudentia* from the 1709 “Ad lectorem”

1. The Theme, and Invocation of the Venetian fathers.
2. Prudence, though it takes its place among the Intellectual Virtues, also and especially concerns the Moral, and is, so to speak, their leader, showing them the middle path between the extreme Vices.
3. How hard it is, especially for adolescents, to hold to the middle path in their actions, and what is to be done by them until such as time as they mature and become more prudent.
4. What Prudence is and what it means in the context of human actions; and that it cannot exist without integrity.
5. The first office of Prudence, which is to consult well; and how that is usually and properly done.
6. The second office of Prudence, which is to choose well; and the things especially conducive to this.
7. The third office of Prudence, which is to judge or command well; and the most important things to observe here.
8. A happy outcome often follows Prudence, although Prudence should definitely not be measured by that.
9. Many rules for learning Prudence could be relayed—but it is difficult to do this well in verse.
10. The main foundation for Prudence is Nature, and how that should be in a very prudent man.
11. How Italians excel other men in this gift of Nature, and among the Italians, the Venetians.
12. There are several rules for acquiring Prudence: chief among which is to observe prudent men especially, and to consult them very frequently.
13. Other rules: that is, to choose that option in doubtful matters you would most recommend to another friend; and to beware especially of immoderate passions, which not infrequently defy or extinguish all Prudence.
- 14 & 15. How the Vices, or Extremes, which are opposed to Prudence, might be described, and how many there are.
16. Cleverness, or Shrewdness; and its habits.

17. Dullness, or Simpleness; its constitution and effects.
18. Conclusion of the Work, to the noble Venetian youths.

Synopsis from the *argumenta* of the 1715 edition

Book 1

1. The Theme of the entire Work, and Invocation of the Venetian fathers.
2. The precepts of Prudence must be relayed in the most meagre verse; and the Muse is not much help with this as she is used to less serious themes and to a much freer style.
3. Prudence takes its place among the Virtues, both among those of the Mind and Reason, commonly called the "Intellectual," and those which pertain to behavior, and are thus called "Moral." Of these she is, so to speak, the leader, and shows the middle path between the extreme Vices.
4. How hard it is for Adolescents to consistently hold to that middle path; and what is to be done by them until such as time as they mature and become more prudent, lest they fall into either Extreme.
5. What Prudence is, which human actions it concerns and moderates; and that it can never exist without virtue and integrity.
6. As he prepares to explain the Parts and Tasks of Prudence, the author excuses himself *en passant* because he is teaching Prudence when perhaps he is less than prudent himself.
7. The first Office of Prudence, to consult well; and what is most to be observed and avoided in order to do that properly and in a timely manner.
8. The second Office of Prudence, to choose well; and the sorts of things that are conducive to this; and in particular, how dangerous it is to deliberate and choose when we are affected either by grief or love.
9. The third Office of Prudence, to judge or command well: and what sorts of things are most to be observed in this regard, according to the matter and the circumstance.
10. Fortune is often the companion of Prudence; although it [Prudence] is certainly not subject to that [Fortune].
11. The Venetians, during that most calamitous time for them, the League of Cambrai, have sufficiently demonstrated what a great defence Prudence can be in adverse circumstances.

Book 2

1. That he who pursues that Prudence whose nature and tasks we have described [in our first book] must avoid many things and attend to many

- things in his studies and behavior. So that he may explain these things, too, in verse, the Author exhorts his now languishing and resisting Muse.
2. The main foundation for Prudence is Nature, and how that should be in a very prudent man.
 3. How Italians excel other men in this gift of nature, and among the Italians, the Venetians.
 4. There are several Rules for acquiring Prudence: and the most important of them is both frequently to read those books in which moral precepts of this kind are contained, and which most particularly provide illustrious examples of prudent men; and also to dispense with these forthwith, and consult those men of our times who are most notable for this virtue.
 5. Other Rules: to choose that option in doubtful matters we ourselves would most recommend to a friend in a similar situation; and to beware especially of immoderate passions, and of these, especially love, since it is rightly and well said by the Greeks that Temperance preserves Prudence.
 6. How the Extremes, or Vices, opposed to Prudence, may be described, and what they are, according to Philosophers.
 7. Cleverness, or Shrewdness; and its habits.
 8. Dullness, or Simpleness; and its constitution.
 9. That men who are in other respects prudent incline from time to time to an Extreme, either through nature or vice. Of these we describe some who, while most obliging in their speech, are often false in their actions; that these same men wander very far from true Prudence, not to say true humanity and friendship.
 10. Others are more simple and less circumspect, proclaiming their own praises too boldly. We should beware their example, lest we say anything about ourselves that is too boastful, and to that extent, more imprudent.
 11. Let no-one trust too much in his own Prudence; and that Prudence without regard for piety and fear of God is absurd and very deceptive.
 12. Conclusion of the Work to the noble Venetian youths.